

Interspecific illusions: Underestimation of the power of the Mediterranean banded centipede

Interspecijske iluzije: Podcjenjivanje snage Opasne strige

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In this paper we present an attack of the centipede *Scolopendra cingulata* Latreille, 1829 on the Sharp-snouted Rock Lizard, *Dalmatolacerta oxycephala* (Duméril & Bibron, 1839). Shortly after the attack, which presumably lead to the lizards' death, the centipede pulled its prey into a hiding place under the rock (Fig. 1). This observation was made on July 7, 2014, in Medvinjak on the island of Korčula (Croatia). It was recorded and reported by Ivan Željковиć.

In this case it is assumed that the lizard seriously underestimated the strength of the centipede in any of the two possible options. The possibility of a direct attack on the lizard by the centipede is the most realistic considering the relationship between the sizes of these animals, but the possibility of the lizard's attack on a centipede and the situation that prey becomes predator also cannot be rejected. Anyway, the lizard underestimated the power of the centipede as in this first case did not result in its escape (*illusion of neutralism*: lizard considers its relationship with centipede as neutral and does not run away) and the second wrong choice of a prey (*paradoxical predation*: prey becoming a predator). Third option

that the centipede scavenged on the dead corpse was rejected because the lizard was still fresh (weakly movement of the tail and extremities was observed) and because centipedes are predominantly carnivorous (Lewis 2007, Sierwald & Bond 2007).

Underestimation of the centipede as the prey was recently reported as failed ingestion of this species by a young sand viper (Arsovski et al. 2014). However, in this case both reptile and centipede were found dead and it can be described as *illusion of predation*. Centipedes of the genus *Scolopendra* are known as dangerous and aggressive predators and as animals that are extremely difficult to predate on (eg. Dugon & Arthur 2012, Arsovski et al. 2014).

It is known that lizards eat centipedes, but not to a great extent (e.g. Hóðar 1996). Centipedes need constantly moisture because they lack the waxy cuticle of insects and arachnids (Barnes 1982), so that the encounters of these animals are probably rare.

Predation on lizards (and other vertebrates) by arthropods is often noted (Bauer 1990, Schwammer & Baurecht 1988, Blondheim & Werner 1989,

Armas 2000, Toledo 2005). Wrong choice of prey, in terms of trying to feed on potentially dangerous prey is also commonly reported (Willson & Hopkins 2011, Jablonski & Vlček 2012, Šukalo et al. 2013).

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Figure 1. Centipede *S. cingulata* in an attack on an adult lizard *D. oxycephala* (A), searching for a safe hiding place (B) and locating suitable shelter, where the ingestion is performed (C)

Slika 1. Stonoga *S. cingulata* u napadu na odraslu guštericu *D. oxycephala* (A), u potrazi za sigurnim skrovištem (B) i pronalasku istog, gdje je ingestija izvršena (C)